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LIFE AND CHARACTER

OF

WILLIAM PENN,

THE

INDIAN'S FRIEND.

AND

FOUNDER OF PENNSYLVANIA.

TO WHICH IS ADDED

BI-CENTENNIAL POEM,

OF 80 LINES.

CAMDEN, N. J.



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LIFE AND CHARACTER

OF

WILLIAM PENN.

Ever since this world has been inhabited by mankind, there have been men whose characters have stood out pre-eminently from the great majority.

In speaking of the past, some have to be admired as poets and painters; others as having displayed their intellectual powers as philosophers and statesmen, and a number, not less worthy of our admiration, as theologians and historians. Many eminent men have appeared on this world's stage, in these different departments of science and art, but as they were dust, unto dust have they returned, showing us that as the leaves of successive autumns follow each other to the earth, so do the various generations of men pass on to the tomb. But, although they have disappeared from amongst us themselves, they have left behind them words and works which will live and be admired till nature itself decays.

William Penn has not left behind him any great works which show him to have been a great literary character, but he might have produced greater works than he has done had he not employed so much of his time in defending and advancing the Quaker religion, the denomination to which he belonged. We have only to mention him

as having been the founder of Pennsylvania to ensure him of a lasting fame.

It was he who drew out the plan of the magnificent city of Philadelphia. It may be said of his writings, as of Thomas DeQuincey's, they are a glorious congregation of threads and patches. In them he does not display the giant mind of a Shakspeare, the philosophy of a Newton, the genius of a Milton, or the knowledge of a Bacon or Macaulay, yet in his own sphere of life he was a great man, and well worthy of our consideration.

His greatness chiefly lay in his untiring zeal and ardent desire for the general welfare of mankind. To have a proper view of such a character as Penn, we must carry our minds back to the times in which he lived, and remember that his lot was cast in an age of great political and religious conflict. It was not so much for political rights as for religious toleration that he so ardently sighed.

He struggled manfully for freedom of conscience ; suffered persecution with fortitude ; was a brilliant star which appeared in the darkness of the seventeenth century. The agitated period in which he lived, demanded firmness, and with fortitude not to be shaken by reverses or dangers, did he nobly aid in bringing about measures for the security of religion, of law, and of freedom. We often find that great men are not formed without severe discipline, and in our present hero, we have a noble example, which will be fully borne out in what remains to be considered in his life and character. In walking through a garden of flowers, they may all appear to be beautiful, and much to be admired ; still, if we had our choice of only a few of them, we are sure we could all find some that we could fancy above the rest. So is it in the moral world as in the natural. Although we ought to love all men, yet there are some who deserve greater praise and higher admiration than others. We have chosen William Penn as a flower that bloomed in the past, and without any further introduction, we will now proceed to give you a brief sketch of his life and character.

William Penn was the son of Admiral Sir William Penn, a distinguished naval officer. He was born in London, in the year 1644, and received the first rudiments of his education at Chigwell school in Essex, England. This place was particularly convenient for him, being near Wanstead, which was then the country residence of his father. As something remarkable is usually said of all great men in the early part of their lives, so it is said of him, that when he was alone in his chamber, being then eleven years old, he was suddenly surprised with an inward comfort, and as he thought, an external glory in the room, which gave rise to religious emotions, during which he had the strongest convictions of the being of a God, and that the soul of man was capable of enjoying communion with him. He believed he had been awakened or called upon to a holy life. But whatever was the external occasion, or whether any or none, certain it was, that while he was at Chigwell school, his mind was seriously impressed on the subject of religion.

Having left Chigwell at twelve years of age, he went to a private school on Tower Hill, which was near to his father's London residence. Here he had great advantages, for his father, to promote his scholarship, kept for him a private tutor in his own house. At the age of fifteen he had made such progress in his studies, that it was thought fit to send him to college. Accordingly he was sent to Christ's Church, Oxford. Here he paid great attention, and took great delight in his college exercises, yet allowing himself ample time for reasonable recreation. And though he pursued his studies, and at times indulged in manly sports, he never forgot the religious impressions which he had received at Chigwell school.

These had been considerably strengthened by the preaching of Thomas Loe, a layman, who had belonged to the University of Oxford, but had then become a Quaker. The doctrines which he promulgated seem to have given a new turn to the mind of Penn. Accordingly he, with a few other students, whom he found to have religious emotions in unison with his own, withdrew from the

national forms of worship, and held private meetings, where they carried on devotional exercises amongst themselves. This gave great offence to the heads of the college, and Penn, at the age of sixteen, with the others, was fined for non-conformity.

At this time an order came down from Charles the Second that surplices should be worn by the students according to the custom of ancient times. This was an unusual sight then at the university. Penn thought that the simplicity and spirituality of the christian religion would be destroyed by the introduction of outward ceremonies and forms, was entirely opposed to them. He and several others fell upon their fellow-students who appeared in them, and tore them over their heads. Being guilty of such conduct they were expelled from college.

In our opinion, we do not think he was justified in going so rashly to work, and though we do not see any good which would have resulted from the wearing of the surplices, neither can we see any harm, so that we give him no credit for the manner in which he acted in this affair.

After his expulsion from college he returned home. His father received him coldly, on account of the public disgrace he had incurred; but he was more displeased at him for abandoning what he called, the fashionable world, and mixing only with serious and religious people. His father thought that his manners, and the company he held, would be an obstruction in the way of his getting on in the world. He argued with him; this had no effect. He proceeded to blows; but made nothing by that. He, therefore, turned him out of doors.

The father, however, either relenting, or hoping to gain his point by other means, brought him back to his own house. Afterward he sent him to France, hoping that the change of scene and the gaiety of French manners might wean him from his old connections. Remaining a short time in Paris, he then proceeded to Italy, and from thence home. This journey had not the desired effect his

father wished ; another plan must be tried, and having three estates in Ireland, he sent him there to take the management of them. All went on well for a short time, but Penn happening to be at Cork on business, was informed that Thomas Loe (before mentioned) was to preach in that city soon. He heard him preach, and the effect was the conviction of Penn, who afterwards constantly attended the meetings of the Quakers, notwithstanding all obstacles.

Shortly after this he was at another meeting of the Quakers, and a proclamation having been issued against all tumultuous assemblies, he and many others were committed to prison.

In prison he wrote to a party of some influence, stating his case, and he was discharged from his place of confinement. His father was informed that he had become a Quaker, and sent for him to come home. The son obeyed, and the interview which passed between them is said to have been very affecting. It seems that his father ardently desired the promotion of his temporal interests, which he feared would be hindered by the way of life he had embraced. The son, sensible of the duty he owed his parents, and afflicted in believing that he could not obey him, but at the risk of his eternal welfare, humbly informed him that he could not act contrary to his conscience, for which he was expelled the second time from the paternal roof.

We have to view him now as thrown upon the world without the means of subsistence, deriving support only from the belief that those who left houses, and parents, and land, for the kingdom of God's sake, would not be left unprovided for. His mother kept up a correspondence with him privately, and sent him money ; he was also looked to by other kind friends, so that he was never left destitute.

In his twenty-fourth year he became a preacher of the gospel and an author. But being a Quaker, and owing to the doctrine that he taught as such, coupled with the severity of the times, he was again put in prison. In this place he wrote a work entitled " No Cross,

No Crown," the purport of which was to show that those who did not suffer for Christ here would not wear a crown in heaven. This work is rich in doctrine and scriptural example, profuse in a display of history ; shows that its author must have been an extensive reader, and had a considerable knowledge of the world.

After being in confinement for several months, a message was sent from the king for his discharge ; and no sooner was he liberated himself, than we find him employing his time in visiting those of his suffering brethren, comforting them under their trials and sufferings. He drew up an account of several of their cases and presented them to the Council—the result of which was that an order was obtained for their release.

The Conventicle Act came out this year (1670) by which the meeting of dissenters was forbidden under severe penalties. Penn was one of the earliest victims to its decrees. As usual he preached and, as usual, he was put in prison for doing so. In a short time his ever memorable trial came on, which lasted five days. On the third day, the jury returned a verdict of "Not Guilty," to the great dissatisfaction of the persons present on the bench as justices ; they were kept in confinement two days longer, without receiving any refreshment. On the fifth day they returned the same verdict. They were fined in forty marks each for not finding the prisoner guilty, and Penn was fined the same for having his hat on while in court. He could not pay the fine, and was kept in confinement. His father, however, soon after paid it, and he got out of his cell once more to have a sight of the green trees around him and the blue sky above him. This trial is inserted in his works, and any reader will be amply repaid by a perusal of it. It shows how nobly Penn stood up in his own defence ; his legal knowledge ; his firmness : and the oppression of the times.

His father became reconciled to him, took ill, and sent for him : told him on his dying bed to do nothing against his conscience : admired him for his plain way of preaching, plain way of living, and left him an estate worth fifteen thousand pounds per annum.

Again was he put in prison. While there he wrote to the High Court of Parliament. Comes out of prison; travels into Holland and Germany, returns to England and gets married, as all wise men do, and settled down at Rickmansworth in Hertfordshire. During the next eight years of his life, from his twenty-eighth to his thirty-sixth year, his time is chiefly employed in writing works of various kinds, such as "England's Present Interest Considered;" "Naked Truth Needs no Shift;" "An Epistle to the Children of Light in this Generation;" "England's Great Interest in the Choice of a New Parliament," and about thirty others on topics similar to the above, all of which are proofs of an active mind: one well stocked with knowledge, and applied to the welfare of his country.

Penn's father had advanced large sums of money for the good of the naval service, and his pay was also in arrears. For these two claims the government was indebted to him no less a sum than sixteen thousand pounds. His son William was desirous, therefore, of closing this account, and petitioned Charles, the Second, that letters patent might be granted him for land in America to that amount.

The King having read the petition, sent it to the Privy Council, afterwards to the Lords' Committee of Trade and Plantations. Great opposition was made to it in both places, and for no other reason than that Penn was a Quaker.

The matter, at length, ended in favor of him, and he was by charter, dated at Westminster, the fourth day March, 1681, and signed by privy seal, made and constituted full and absolute proprietor of all that tract of land which he had solicited and marked out, and invested with the power of ruling and governing the same.

This province in America was named Pennsylvania in honor of his father for his able services in the navy. The first thing that Penn did with regard to his new province, after having obtained the charter, was to draw up some account of it, and the terms on which he intended to part with the land. He also drew up a rough sketch of that great frame of government which he himself wished to become the future and permanent one of the province.

It consisted of twenty-four articles, and the first great fundamental one, gave all who landed on that province that liberty of conscience which the laws of their own country denied them, and in behalf of which he had both written and suffered so frequently himself. The purchasers were well pleased with the terms, and they unanimously signed them.

The governor, Penn. having some arrangements to make before embarking for his province, sent commissioners to confer with the Indians respecting their lands; they were enjoined in a solemn manner to treat them with all possible candor, justice and humanity. He also sent a letter with them, stating therein to the Indians that he would shortly visit them himself, and be their true friend. Several ships set sail for Pennsylvania, and the proprietor of the same soon followed.

He left a delightful letter behind him to his wife and children for their guidance in his absence; arrived in Pennsylvania in the year 1682; made his great treaty with the Indians; fixed on a site for his new city; drew out its plan, and called it Philadelphia.

He afterwards met with his Council, which sat twenty-two days, engaged in making laws for the governing of the province. He remained here for two years, busily taken up in advancing everything he thought advisable for his new colony.

Hearing of fresh persecutions in England, he repaired thither to use his influence with the court to stop them. When he arrived in England, he was in his fortieth year, and from this to his fifty-fourth his time was spent in preaching, in writing, and exerting his influence to the utmost for the good of his fellow-men.

Having remained in England at this time for fourteen years, things were not going on so smoothly in Pennsylvania owing to his absence. He again embarked for the new world, and remained there for two years, when business of importance called him home to England, and he left his new colony to return to it no more. As he advanced in life, he did not relax his ardor in doing good; for up till within six

years of his death : he wrote, he preached, and went about doing good by every possible means. During the last six years of his life he became very embarrassed in circumstances. Having laid out large sums of money for his new colony, and more especially for the good of the Indians, he was obliged to mortgage his province for six thousand six hundred pounds. This money was advanced him by his friends.

A few years before he died he became subject to apoplectic fits, and a little defective in his memory, which some have attributed to insanity or lunacy, which we think is incorrect, judging from the testimony of those who attended him during his illness. After a life of self-denial, of labor and suffering, he departed this life on the thirtieth day of July, 1718, in the seventy-fourth year of his age, at Rushcomb, in Berkshire, England. He manfully endured the cross, and we have great reason to believe that he has now obtained the crown.

Having now traced what we consider to be the leading incidents in this great man's life, it will be our object now to enlarge or consider more closely the principal features of his character. And we think we may deduce from what has been already given, and from what follows, that he was a man of courage and benevolence : patient and persevering under many trials ; possessing an active and philanthropic mind ; did all in his power to ameliorate the physical and advance the moral welfare of mankind. He not only laid down precepts but showed a good example. Several authors have attempted to throw out insinuations upon his character, which, so far as we can judge are unjust, and without good foundation. It is evident from his works that he was a man of ability, and from his conduct through life, that he was a man of the purest conscience. He was equalled by few in his attention to the poor, and his memory was held dear by those who lived in his own neighborhood, for the many good services done by him towards them. Several parents gave their children his full name in honor of the memory of his worth. And we cannot too much admire his noble treatment to the Indians in his colony. He

knew they were human beings possessing the same nature as himself, and treated them in the same manner as he would like to have been treated himself, had he been in the same position. He did not take the land from them by force, as too many would have done, but bought it from them. Neither did he meet them with swords and staves, but with a countenance indicative of love and good-will towards them in his heart. They formed a great attachment to him and said they would love, serve, and obey him with all that they had. He, christian-like, fulfilled the promise he had made to them before he saw them : that of being their true friend.

He has taught us in his much-to-be-admired dealings with them, that we ought to respect the lives and properties of the most unenlightened nations. By using weapons, not carnal, but spiritual, he was the means of bringing many of these untutored Indians from ferocious habits to the blessings of civilized life. Here we have a picture grand, worthy of all praise : the savage meeting with the civilized as true friends : the barbarian and the christian meet as brothers : and here is to be found ample scope for the artist to display his powers on the canvas.

The soldier is to be admired in fighting bravely the battles of his country : the sailor who courageously faces the mighty waves of a tempestuous sea : but the man is more worthy of praise who is the instrument in God's hands of bringing many heathens from darkness to light, from ignorance to a knowledge of the truth. It was not to be great in the world's esteem, or to leave behind him a lasting fame, that he purchased the province of Pennsylvania : no, he had a nobler end in view.

He designed it for a retreat, more particularly for the people of his own religious persuasion ; but he had also in view all those who were suffering from religious persecution. He was desirous for them to leave the vicious customs and rotten parts both of the political and religious constitution of the old world, and embark for that empire which he had provided for them in the new, where they might wor-

ship God unmolested by any persecutors. Many of them were glad to take the advantage of such a change; and it has been well supposed that during the seventy years that William Penn's principles prevailed, or the Quakers had the principal share in the government of Pennsylvania, that there was no spot on the globe where, number for number, there was so much virtue, or so much true happiness, as amongst the inhabitants of the province, and setting aside the early difficulties of a new colony, it was considered a little paradise upon earth.

Penn seems to have been a man in real earnest, or he never would have accomplished what he did. He properly understood, that unless men were willing to undergo privations, and lead a life of self-denial in the course of their christian warfare, they could never expect to become capable of wearing a crown of eternal glory.

He was one who tasted persecution when he was very young, but these persecutions appear only to have strengthened him in his work and labor of love, and seldom, if ever, did he grow weary in well doing, being sensible that he would reap its fruits if he did not faint.

Many a fainting heart must have thrilled with joy towards him, for the arduous intercession and labors put forth by him for their relief. While many of his suffering brethren were fined and confined for their religion, he spared neither time nor talent for their benefit, and by his advocacy of and influence, he was the means of relieving many from their oppressed condition. He held forth that the nature of body and soul—of earth and heaven—of this world and that to come, differed; and that no man ought to be persecuted by his fellow-men in this world, for anything that belonged to the next. Indeed, his whole life appears to have been spent in advocating for religious toleration, and devising means and new schemes for the good of his country, and that happiness might prevail amongst men. For this was he twice turned out of his father's house, and for this did he suffer imprisonment so often, and we believe had he been called upon to die upon the scaffold for the same, he would have counted each

step up the ladder, as taking him a degree nearer heaven in resigning to his fate. In all his writings, and nearly all his letters, (many of them he wrote), there breathes a spirit of piety and reliance upon God; and though his life was a scene of trial and suffering, we doubt not but he had intervals of joy and happiness the most solid and brilliant.

An anecdote worth relating is recorded of him when in Pennsylvania, which goes very much to show that he was a man void of all pride. It runs thus: "A little girl was travelling along a road, and it happened that Penn, who was on horseback, overtook her. He enquired where she was going, and she informing him, he, with his usual good nature, desired her to get up behind him; and bringing his horse to a convenient place, she mounted, and so rode away on the bare back. Being without shoes or stockings, her bare legs and feet hung dangling by the side of his horse. So that, although he was the Governor of Pennsylvania, he did not think it beneath him to help a poor barefooted girl on her way."

Although this may appear trifling to mention, yet when we see a great man stooping to do small things which are commendable, we doubt not but opportunities are only required to show more amiable traits in his character.

In conclusion it may be said that he was a great statesman; he seems to have had a mind capable of directing its energies usefully to every department of a new colony, whether in that of agriculture, building, government or religion. Our opinion is that he was a kind husband, a loving father, a noble patriot, and a great and good man.

BI-CENTENNIAL POEM.

All hail the Bi-Centennial year,
Let joy be through the land ;
Ring bells ! rejoice, and let flags wave !
The time is now at hand,
When looking back upon the past,
Two centuries have fled.
And now this year commemorates,
The great illustrious dead.

The founder of Pennsylvania,
Good man and Indian's friend.
Was born in London, sixteen forty-four.
His name was William Penn.
He landed on the Delaware,
Year sixteen eighty-two.
With much joy was he welcomed
By Dutch, Swedes, and English. too.

See in Philadelphia State House,
His table and his chair ;
Also the compass and chains he used.
When planning this city rare.

Near to the foot of Market street,
Letitia, Number Ten,
You'll find a cottage there, which once
Belonged to William Penn.

The great philanthropist appears.
Round his waist a sash of blue ;
No sword nor pistol by his side,
But a loving heart and true.
Under the great old elm tree,
Indians gather round ;
Their bows and arrows laid aside,
And seated on the ground.

Below its widely spreading branches.
Under its leafy shade,
With christian and barbarian,
A treaty then was made.
The treaty was so broad and free :
The Indians did say then,
That so long as the sun would shine,
They would love William Penn.

On tablets of durable marble,
Engrave the name of Penn,
Who met the wild barbarians,
And treated them like men.

Wisdom is better than riches :

Better than weapons at war :

Better than fame's high-sounding name.

Better than gold by far.

The great man Penn, the big elm tree,

Are long, long past and gone,

The words and works of the one survives,

In place of the other a stone.

Ever memorable treaty stone,

Where Indian and christian met,

A scene so grand and beautiful,

We love to think of it yet.

In that noble breast dwelt love divine,

But he could not keep it there :

He had so much of that holy love,

With others he would share.

But as leaves in autumn fall from trees,

And moulder into dust,

So man doth leave this earthly home,

To sleep in grave at last.

He died in Rushcomb, England :

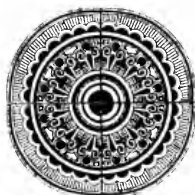
His age was seventy-four :

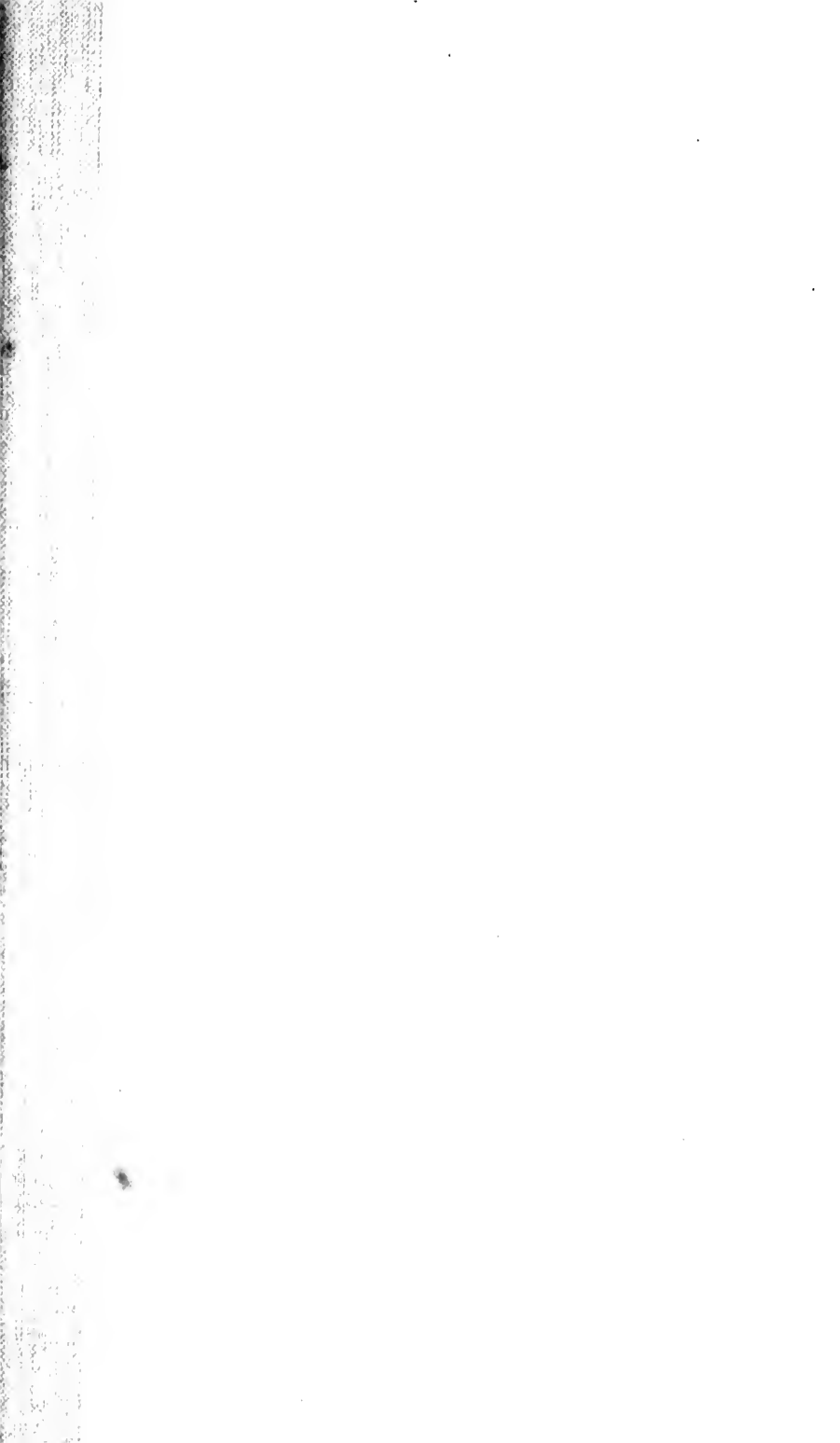
Many tears were shed when his great soul fled

To yonder happy shore.

From beyond the starry stairway,
His spirit may come down,
Whisp'ring to friends to bear the cross,
And they shall receive the crown.

No pomp or jewel'd vanity was his,
We will not see his like again ;
Let fame's high trumpet speak aloud
Of such an one as Penn.
Writer, preacher, politician,
Lover of God and man ;
And till nature itself decays
Last will the name of Penn.





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